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ABSTRACT

Music educators for too long have relied upon "aesthetic education" as the sole rationale for including music in the overall curriculum. Music education is really about music making; it is a social process that is of value because it helps students learn about discipline, attachment to social groups, and autonomy. Music educators must provide concrete, defensible rationales to curriculum planners as to why their discipline should be included in the curriculum. This inclusion must be grounded in the values of music as they apply to the goals of the school and education as well as the goals of the music itself. A list of 29 references is included. (DB)

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A Sociological Perspective

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Doubt in Aesthetic Education as a Complete Rationale for School Music[1]

A Sociological Perspective

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In 1970 Bennett Reimer published his now famous Philosophy of Music Education and the music education community grasped at it like a drowning child in an attempt to present a rationale of substance for the inclusion of music education by curriculum planners. The world had just survived the hippies and flower children and the American educational community was challenging the curricular inclusion of such apparent frills as music in a search for subjects of importance and merit, most specifically because of the perceived Russian superiority in space and the famous Sputnik. Thus "aesthetic education" was given popular birth, not as the conclusion of an argument but as a premise upon which all else would naturally follow. Reimer writes,

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[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented in German to the 8th annual Symposion of the Internationale Gesellshaft für Polyästhetische Erziehung in Austria in 1989. A copy of the original paper, "Zweifel an der ästhetische Erziehung als ausreichende Begründung der Schulmusik" is available from the author.

> If music education in the present era could be characterized by a single overriding purpose, one would have to say this field is trying to become "aesthetic education". What is needed in order tc fulfil this purpose is a philosophy which shows how and why music education is aesthetic in its nature and value. (1970:2)

Coupled with what Hargreaves (1979 & 1982) calls the "cult of individualism", aesthetic education conjured up pictures of students who would grow up to be educated in "feeling", as in "knowing", experiencing Mahler in the luxury of a soft leather arm chair in their split-level overlooking the sea. Lukes (1973:107) writes that the "paradigm epistemological individualist is perhaps the empiricist, who holds that (individual) experience is the source of knowledge, that all knowledge arises within the circle of the individual mind and the sensations it receives". Education came to rest on the motto that if we educate individuals, society would take care of itself.

Aesthetic education is rooted in philosophy and not music-making. While it is true that aesthetics often attempts to explain the response to music, it is not epistemologically derived from the same activity as music-making. Because aesthetic education was accepted as "given", all the remaining efforts of the music teaching profession and the rhetoric generated by it have tended towards attempts to inject the principles of aesthetic education into the curriculum delivery without questioning the presumption that it should be the ideal, and even more seriously because this injection principle was pressed into service to the exclusion of, or replacement for, all other logical justifications for the inclusion of music in the curriculum. In fact, aesthetic education might be considered little more than a hoax perpetrated upon music education at a time when our discipline appeared to need an academic shroud to conceal its curriculum inclusionary authority.

Nineteen years later, in 1989, Reimer has released the second edition of his book and claims that aesthetic education, while still imperfectly understood, has become the "bedrock upon which our self-concept as a profession rests"(1989: xi). While Reimer may be engaged in wishful thinking about the state of the profession and the importance of his manuscript, research by Hanley (1989:49) at the University of Victoria has shown quite conclusively that Reimer's claim is simply not justifiable. While investigating the attitudes to philosophies of music education, Hanley admits to have found a "verbal" acceptance of the aesthetic music education movement" but concludes that "although the ideal usually serves as a distant vision of what will never be, the divergence between actual and ideal co..cepts of music in the schools which emerges in the study suggests the need for an on-going examination of goals".

The impotence of aesthetic education has been further exacerbated by the apparent variety of aesthetic theories which are proposed as foundations for music education. Steinecker (1985) outlines three discreet theories and their implications for arts education. Hanley (1989:47) suggests that Reimer sees referentialism and absolutism as opposite ends of a continuum. This can hardly lead to a healthy foundation for curricular inclusion when the aesthetic theorists, upon whose models we are to gain confidence and a justifiable place in the schooling arena, are in themselves so divergent that any semblance of agreement is impossible. I am reminded of Charles Hoffer's recent remark (1988) when he writes,

> Divisions within the house of music education have a long and almost honored history. Somehow the profession has survived and grown despite internal disunity.

I believe that there are reasons external to the aesthetic education debate as to why music education has survived. It is time that these reasons be added to our rhetoric.

The faint voice which counters the aesthetic education rationale has been historically known as the "utilitarian" philosophy. Charles Elliott writes,

> Many of the utilitarian claims are simply not true, many can be achieved more efficiently in other ways, many do not require the services of a highly trained music teacher, and most importantly, under such a rationale music education could run the risk of losing its integrity as a discipline. (1983:36)

Here is the real cry of a desperate man! The idea that music education is safe because music, as a arts discipline, cannot be attacked as it might be as a utilitarian subject is now even disputed by the guru himself. Reimer writes "any claim we can make for the value of music in education can be made equally validly by every other art" (1989:227). With one sweeping sentence, Reimer has acknowledged that his entire position is unjustifiable. Thus it is as an arts subject that music education stands to lose its integrity as a discipline. This debate has been undertaken in Canada by many including Steinecker (1983) (1985) (1986) and Countryman (1984).

Although it may not be pleasant to suggest, the curriculum can hardly be justified because it may or may not require the services of a highly trained music specialist. I took Latin from a highly trained specialist of that subject too! And it is not true that specifically what music education can offer as a so-called "utilitarian" subject can necessarily be achieved by other means at all, let alone better. In fact, I believe that what has passed as "utilitarian" is as largely misunderstood as what attempts to pass as "aesthetic education". While there are certainly trivial utilitarian pursuits among those often listed in that category, there are many

which are as strong or stronger than anything which the aesthetic educationists have proposed. More to that follows.

The point is, that despite the continued rhetoric about how it should be, the delivery of music education programs appears to have carried on in a fashion which largely ignored the pleas and directions of aesthetic education in the literature. To conclude that Hanley's findings suggest that music education is failing because of the gulf between "actual and ideal" is to hold steadfastly to the view that aesthetic education deserves so very much attention in the first place. As society changes, music educational rhetoric may soon catch up to what music education has been doing all along with its bedrock resistance, in practice, to the exclusive claims of the aesthetic educationists.

The most recent aesthetic education exhortation from a Canadian writer comes in an article by Earl Davey (1989) titled "An Assessment of Common Practice in Music Education". His conclusion bluntly states that "we need to adopt the goals and objectives of aesthetic education". Much of his argument goes to establishing that "value" is important. Thus we read of the "value of art" and of "genuine value" and the "value to our society" and finally to a practice that "mistakenly assigns value to music which is trivial". We also read of the "vital significance of music to a culture".

Davey also refers to the famous appendix to Frege's Grundgesetze der Arithmetik which reads, "Hardly anything more unfortunate can befall a scientific writer than to have one of the foundations of his edifice shaken after the work is finished" (Geach and Black, 1970).

It is the supreme irony that Davey has discovered the axiom without realising that his edifice is seriously flawed.

While it may be possible to apply current aesthetic standards like some sort of IQ test upon the musics of the world, all but those forms of music from which the current aesthetic theory was developed will undoubtedly fail the test. IQ tests measure well what they measure but we have long acknowledged that this is not "intelligence". While the regnant aesthetic positions might well be used to address the worth of a composition by Mahler or Brahms, it quite clearly does not measure up as an instrument to assess the value of other world musics. Elliott (1984) writes,

> It should be a matter of interest and concern to music educators in North America that our own prevailing philosophy of music education (Reimer, 1970) rests upon preconceptions that may be inimical to the advancement of global musical perspectives, and multicultural music education.

In fact, Elliott concludes later in the same piece that "the diversity of global music activity precludes the deduction of universals from Western aesthetics" (1984:37).

What I find so puzzling is the fact that Davey unwittingly gives so many clues as to a more contemporary version of the assessment of common practice in music education. The first clue comes with his statement of the "value to our society". What society, we may ask? Is there any assurance in the contemporary make-up of the multicultural Canadian community that there is a consensus as to what "society" Davey refers to? Somewhat later he writes of the "vital significance of music to a culture". We do not learn what this significance is nor do we learn anything about the culture of which he writes. There follows discussion of music of "genuine value" as if this value were somehow entrenched within the music itself, while at the

same time he argues that our common practice is able to "assign value". I would suggest that it is difficult to have it both ways. Either it is assigned by someone or some group or it is an innate quality of the artwork. If it is a combination of both, it still falls on Davey to explain this apparent confusion.

Coates (1983:32) suggests that "music education will become a part of curriculum because of how it addresses concerns for society and the individual. Phillips (1983:30) asks whether a Board of Education member might better understand the "intellectual, moral, and physical forces of music more than the aesthetic?"

In light of today's social climate in the schools, it might be of some significance to examine the idea of a "moral education" again. Moral education can be traced to Plato and is described by Britton (1958:195) in Mark (1982:19) as follows,

> American schools tend to place too heavy a reliance upon ancillary values which music may certainly serve but which cannot, in the end, constitute its justification. Plato, of course, is the original offender in this regard and his general view that the essential value of music lies in its social usefulness seems to be as alive today as ever.

In Phillips (1983:30) we read of a father's comment that "My son's participation in the school music program didn't add one dollar to his earning upon graduation". This statement can be just as easily applied to other subjects in the school program. It is hard to conceive how calculus will be used by a cashier in a department store whose cash register makes virtually every calculation, including charge totals, discount, taxes and change, all by itself. It is difficult to conceive that the study of old British history will make any significant difference to the way a young Canadian carries on his life. Almost no single element of the school curriculum can

be held up as vital or necessary. One could easily ignore the novels of Conrad, the plays of Shakespeare or the poems of Keats. But without plunging into a Marxist discussion of the usefulness of schools to society, it is still possible to conclude that music education offers much of significance to the prospective job seeker. It may not, on the other hand, be too apparent to the boy's father or employer as to the benefits of the music program, because our professional rhetoric has been flogging for nearly 20 years exclusively some esoteric gobbledigoop about aesthetics which few music educators and fewer school administrators seem to understand let alone the lay population.

In today's industrial community, the Japanese model of management has taken a firm hold on Western manufacturing. The principals of this managerial style rest, however, firmly exposed in the writings of the father of sociology, Emile Durkheim. In The Division of Labour in Society (1933) and in Moral Education (1925) Durkheim outlines his profoundly sociological conception of morality.

> Everything which is a source of solidarity is moral, everything which forces man to take account of other men is moral, everything which forces him to regulate his conduct though something other than the striving of his ego is moral, and morality is as solid as these ties are numerous and strong (1933).

Hargreaves (1979:26) unravels the three basic foundation statements in Durkheim's position.

(1) discipline

(2) attachment to social groups

(3) autonomy

The threats to social solidarity cannot be met with a morality based in religion Durkheim suggests, but only with a secular and rational morality transmitted through the school. The first element is discipline. Hargreaves writes, "here is a vocabulary - 'discipline, authority, duty, will - which a sociologist of education hardly dare whisper...however it soon becomes apparent that discipline is understood as a condition of, not a barrier to, freedom. Musicians have known this rule first-hand forever. Any progress made towards becoming a performing musician flows from the diligent expenditure of energies at the discipline of practice and effort. One works hard at 'getting it right' and the knowledge of and appreciation for those who have accomplished in the art of music-making emerges from this experience. Becoming a music-maker takes concentrated effort and discipline over long periods of time. It takes many years to develop the skills society acknowledges to be valuable. By definition, a student who is accomplished as a music-maker will know and appreciate the discipline required. This is what music education has been doing!

Durkheim suggest that the second element of morality rests with the attachment to social groups. He writes, man is complete only as he belongs to several societies, morality itself is complete only to the extent that we feel identified with those different groups in which we are involved (1925).

Music education has been driven in Canada by our performing groups. It is through those groups that music education presents its face to society. Like in the Japanese industrial model, the collective outcome depends upon this identification with the group's purpose and the rewards are reflected in the individuals who contribute to the group's success. Thus when

individual accomplishment through disciplined activity is brought to collective power through association, man learns that his own skills are amplified through the efforts of others. In fact, individualism is minimally impotent and ultimately destructive in the group setting.

These are the messages of all good school music conductors. We learn that the band sound or the choral sound depends upon a co-operative effort, weakened by our individual failings and strengthened by our disciplined contribution. This is what music education does!

The final concern is autonomy. Hargreaves explains that authority must be obeyed not in a spirit of 'passive resignation' but out of 'enlightened allegiance'. To teach morality, Durkheim writes, is neither to preach nor indoctrinate; it is to explain and understand. This progression towards good music teaching is clear. Individual disciplined accomplishment contributed to group effort which provides a medium for autonomous understanding. Good music teachers explain the construction of music, the rational for interpretations and provide an environment for the appreciation of the task at hand. This is what good music education does!

School, suggests Durkheim, must above all give the pupil the clearest possible idea of the groups to which he belongs and will belong. The key function of the school is to breathe life into the spirit of association. Few experiences in schooling provide the concentrated devotion and enthusiasm that our performing ensembles provide our students. Much of the apparent difficulty in establishing a believable "worth" of the music-making experiences for our students is suggested in the writings of Christopher Small (1987) where he writes that because the English language has no verb for music-making and that the word "music" is applied

undifferentially to both the "product" and the "score" of music, that these things are not always separated in the minds of English speaking thinkers because they have no discreet words to apply to quite different things. Because "I music" is not possible in the English language, the value placed upon this activity is perhaps also questionable. Small (1987:50) coins the participle "musicking" and writes,

> It is in the present-day classical tradition of both performance and composition that we find this attitude [music as entities] has completely taken over the musical process. Classical musicians and listeners alike today view music as things - treasured symphonies, sonatas, operas, tone poems and concertos...

The educational outcome is that we stress learning about these objets d'art rather than concentrating on the "musicking". Learning about, listening to, analyzing, and determining the "value or worth" of these music objects has grown in the rhetoric of music education to be superior in importance to the values of "musicking".

Small writes,

> It follows that whatever meaning there is in music is to be found in that act [of musicking] rather than in the actual works themselves. (1987:51)

The apparent link of aesthetic education to individualism is only half of the story here and I return to the confusion created by Davey (1989). It is much more important that we have been led to believe that music has "meaning" and that except for the highly learned symbolic meanings associated with program music, this meaning rests deep inside the music. The worth of or value of music rests inside the music itself, so much so, that it has been suggested that Wagner's music is better than it sounds. Most of the aesthetic education rhetoric rests upon

the greater European musical traditions of the 18th and 19th centuries. As Small (1989:9) has suggested,

> In societies that are dominated by European values, European appearance is the norm and taken for granted, becoming in this way invisible, while African is the aberration, and thus highly visible, even, as in the Americas, after nearly five hundred years of daily interaction.

Can other musics be valued through the application of the European aesthetic or if we are to continue the rhetoric of aesthetic education must we not expand our theoretical base to include other forms of world musics?

Some sociologists have taken the perspective that the value or worth of music rests in the beholder. At first it may appear that this position stretches belief beyond a sensible boundary but a quick reminder of how the fine arts often works ensures us that this explanation does indeed apply to the arts, including music. A typical career path as a painter is to produce canvas after canvas in obscurity until one day, with luck, the artist gets "discovered". Thus the quality of the art work is never questioned, only the public recognition of it after this discovery process. The value (both artistic and financial) of the artwork depends not on the artwork but on the recognition by society. What usually follows, however, is not a discussion of why people have discovered the artist but about the qualities of the artwork thus ensuring the myth that the value rests in the masterpiece and not simply in the recognition of it.

One of the most thorough expositions of this perspective in music education comes from Vulliamy (1977 & 1978). He writes about the apparent culture class of school music as teachers try to bring their Bach and Beethoven to students who are having a relationship with

another music altogether. Later, together with John Shepherd (1984), Vulliamy argues that everything about music is socially determined or culturally embedded. Vulliamy's position is developed to its logical conclusion and is often viewed as extreme by more traditional music educators. While his position has often been refuted by Swanwick (1988), it nevertheless points to important weaknesses in the exclusive aesthetic education propaganda.

In the USA, the most important position on the sociological position of music has been taken by Kingsbury (1984:52) who writes,

> The concrete reality of music is social process; it is social process which gives music meaning, and it is this meaning which makes music what it "is". Music is a category of social meaning.

This issue is most complex and a simple exposition such as this cannot fill the needs of a more thorough development of these themes. But we must begin to ask if there is substantially more to the social reality of music in our schooling than the aesthetic scholars would have us believe. The curricular inclusion of music in the schooling of Canadian youth must be grounded on the values of music as they apply to the goals of the school and education as well as just the goals of music. While the discipline of music may need an aesthetic explanation, curriculum developers may see additional values of equal or more importance.

Let me be quick to point out that what I have written earlier (Roberts 1989:8) concerning the "centricity of music" to the music education process applies here equally strongly. "If the educational outcomes are other than "musical", then the activity has no authenticity within the music curriculum." Can we be reasonably sure that the measure we

apply to test for the degree of "musical centricity" takes into account all the important values of music including the social and moral ones? Is our aesthetic model diverse enough to include all the musics available to our programs? Have we given enough consideration to the "musicking" values and the "moral" values that rightfully belong to music education? I have written earlier (1988:30) that,

> With a performance-based program, we give an opportunity for students to experience the thrill of musical risk-taking. We give opportunities for our students to excel beyond their expectations...

The "musicking" value is considerable. It has merit and importance for its own sake. The moral and social values are equally persuasive. They too have merit and importance. It is critical that we add these substantial benefits to school music to our rhetoric both within the profession and beyond.

There is no argument that an appropriately applied aesthetic foundation may be of significant importance to the art of music. Whether it is of equal or of such exclusionary necessity to curricular inclusion is perhaps not as clear as some aesthetic educationists would have us believe.

Music in the schools of Canada continues to be under seige. As more and more "modern" subjects such as computing push their way into the curriculum already overflowing with valued content, curriculum planners are constantly searching for less important material to purge in order to make way for these newcomers. We have, during the past quarter of a century, based our inclusion within the curriculum solely and totally on an aesthetic education model which is both flawed and transparent. Such notable studies as Goodlad (1984:220) and

Wiktin (1974) have pointed out the failings of our practice. It is imperative for our faith to continue that we abandon the exclusive hold the aesthetic education rhetoric has on our profession. There is doubt that some will be convinced. A shift into a more modern and eclectic vision is the only hope for the dispelling of this doubt.

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